

**Bible Study Class**  
**Clayton Presbyterian Church**  
**Lesson 4 Jesus**

**The Beginning of Christ's Ministry**

Opening prayer: Father in heaven, we thank you for the many ways you strengthen us and reveal your life to us. Grant that your Spirit may penetrate us more and more, enabling us to be your witnesses in the world. Amen.

**Jesus' First Disciples**

**Read** John 1:35-51

Q 1. What name did Jesus give to Simon son of Jonah? Cephias or Peter which means stone or rock. Why do you think Jesus gave it to him? In the Bible the changing of a name meant a turning point in a person's life. The new name usually meant something about a new purpose. We know Peter as the rock upon which Christ built his church. Peter was anything but a rock; he was impulsive and unstable. In Acts, however, he was a pillar of the early church. Jesus named him not for what he was but for what, by God's grace, he would become.

Q 2. Who did Philip tell Nathaniel they had found? We found the one Moses and the prophets wrote about. What question did Nathaniel ask? Can any good thing come from Nazareth? What reply did he receive? Come and see.

Q 3. What did Jesus say in reference to Nathaniel? He has no guile in him. What does that mean? There is no deceit in him.

Q 4. Who did Nathaniel say Jesus was? The Son of God, king of Israel.

Q 5. What "greater things" did Jesus say Nathaniel would see?

He would see the heavens open and angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man.

V 35 The two disciples mentioned here one was Andrew other is not named, but it has been thought that he was John, the author of this Gospel. They had been baptized by John the Baptist and looked to him as their religious teacher.

V 40 Andrew was from Bethsaida but later lived with Peter at Capernaum, where they fished for a living.

V 45 Notice that Philip mentions Joseph, Jesus' earthly or legal father.

V 46 Here are three reasons that Nathaniel downplays Nazareth. (1) Nazareth's relative insignificance it is not even mentioned in the OT or the extra-biblical literature of the day; (2) the widespread understanding that the Messiah would come from Judea; or (3) Nathanael's pride in his own hometown of Cana.

V 48 The fig tree's shade was a favorite place for study and prayer in hot weather.

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V 51 In Jesus' ministry the disciples will see heaven's testimony about Jesus as plainly as if they heard an announcement from heaven concerning him. The angels of God ascending and descending refer to Jacob's dream

**Jesus' First Miracle**

Read John 2:1-12

Q 6. Where was Jesus when He performed His first miracle? He was in Cana. What occasion brought Him there? A wedding.

Q 7. What was the miracle? He turned water into wine. Who encouraged Him to do it? His mother. Why? She didn't want the family embarrassed and she knew that he could do it. What does that say about the faith that person had in Jesus? She knew him to be a resourceful person, and if anyone could help, he could.

Q 8. What does this miracle demonstrate about Jesus? By providing an abundance of wine at a wedding feast, John probably was testifying that Christ's saving mission would culminate in the redemption of the creation from all its distresses, so that the wine of joy would flow fully, as the prophets had announced. Joel 3: 18 says "In that day the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water. A fountain will flow out of the Lord's house and will water the valley of acacias.

V 1 Little is known of how a wedding was performed in the Holy Land in the first century, but clearly the feast was very important and might go on for a week. To fail in proper hospitality was a serious offense.

V 3 More than a minor social embarrassment, since the family had an obligation to provide a feast of the socially required standard. There was no great variety in beverages, and people normally drank water or wine. Mary's involvement implies she had some sort of role at the wedding.

V 6 Jews became ceremonially defiled during the normal circumstances of daily life and were cleansed by pouring water over their hands. For a lengthy feast with many guests a large amount of water was required for this purpose.

V 8-9 Apparently, he was one of the guests, charged with serving as master of ceremonies.

V 10 Ordinarily, after the guests' sensibilities were dulled, the "cheaper wine" was served.

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V 11 While the servants were aware of the transformation of the water to wine, only the disciples believed and saw Jesus' glory. The passage concludes with a reference to Jesus, his disciples, and his family going down to Capernaum

V 12. Capernaum was approximately 16 miles northeast of Cana on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum became Jesus' base of operation for his Galilean ministry.

I must deviate from the flow of this lesson to insert an explanation for why Jesus makes his base of operations Capernaum. If you want to follow along, I'm reading from Luke 4:16-30. I may be the one out of order, and we may skip this story later.

**Jesus Cleanses the Temple**

**Read** John 2:13-25

Q 9. When Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Passover, what did He find in the temple? Sellers of oxen, sheep, and doves as well as the money changers.

John's reference to the temple courts refers to the area surrounding the temple proper. Buying and selling took place in the court of the Gentiles. Jesus was outraged that God's temple had become a marketplace. The temple tax was to be paid in local currency, so foreigners had to have their money changed. The money changers often charged exorbitant exchange rates. The people were required to make a sacrificial offering as well. Since many of the pilgrims came from great distances, they could not bring their own animals, which meant that animal merchants had a flourishing business in the temple courtyard. The price of the sacrificial animals sold in the courtyard was much higher than elsewhere.

Q 10. What did Jesus do when He found the above conditions at the temple?

He made a scourge or whip of small cords and drove them out. What did he say? He told them not to make His Father's house a marketplace. His attack specifically targets the religious leaders who preside over the corrupt temple system.

Q 11. Why did the Jews ask Jesus for "a sign?" The Jews demanded that Jesus perform a sign to demonstrate his authority to clear the temple.

What sign did Jesus give them? His answer is ironic in that the Jews themselves would be the means of bringing about this sign. Jesus said not that he would destroy the temple but that they would destroy it and he would raise it.

What did it mean? They understood him to be speaking about the literal temple. John clarifies for his readers that Jesus was speaking about his own body.

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When did His disciples remember this sign? After Jesus' resurrection the disciples remembered his words. In the past, God had manifested his presence and glory in the Jerusalem temple, but now it was and is manifested in the person of his Son.

### **Jesus and Nicodemus**

**Read** John 3: 1-21

Q 12. Who was Nicodemus? He was impressed by Jesus' signs but did not yet have genuine faith. He was a member of the Pharisees in the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court for religious matters. He appeared to express a sincere desire to learn more about Jesus. Why did he come to Jesus? Nicodemus began by acknowledging that Jesus came from God, evident because of Jesus' signs. His use of the pronoun "we" implies that his inquiry was not just for himself but possibly for others. What had caused him to come to that conclusion? Jesus' signs. Why do you think he came at night? Perhaps Nicodemus was afraid to come by day. Or he may have wanted a long talk, which would have been difficult in the daytime with the crowds around Jesus. Either way, John uses a nighttime setting metaphorically as well to indicate Nicodemus's lack of understanding.

Q 13. What did Jesus, at first, say to Nicodemus? Except a man be born again, he can't see the kingdom of God. The Greek likely also means "born from above". Both meanings are consistent with Jesus' redeeming work and both are important emphases in John's Gospel. Judaism taught that this was to be a future kingdom and that all Jews who faithfully kept the law would be admitted to it freely. How did Nicodemus respond? Nicodemus interpreted Jesus' words literally. He is baffled. He is disturbed. His commitment to the Torah and obedience, to prayer and sacrifice, and his understanding of election, responsibility, and privilege have all been challenged. He should have no problem understanding that the Spirit of God can transform; but he is a man standing on the frontier, looking at a new country and wondering how such momentous events will unfold. Jesus noted that if someone is to enter God's kingdom, they must be born of water and the Spirit. This phrase "water and the Spirit" is parallel to being "born again," but it expands on the concept from Ezekiel.

**Ezekiel 36:25-27**

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I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

As a religious leader, Nicodemus should have been familiar with this passage. When one is born again, they receive a spiritual cleansing. What did Jesus then tell him? Jesus illustrated his point by comparing the work of the Spirit to the blowing of the wind. The words "wind" and "spirit" translate the same Greek and Hebrew words. While the wind's origin is invisible, its effects are apparent; the same is true of those born of the Spirit.

Q 14. How is one "born of water and the Spirit?" People become members of an earthly family by natural birth, but they become members of God's family by spiritual birth. Jesus was emphatic that there is no other way to join God's family than by rebirth. Why is essential to be born in such a manner? This is the only way to eternal life.

Q 15. What did Jesus mean when He said that He had to be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness? Jesus then refers to a story from Numbers 21, in which Moses built a serpent of bronze and elevated it among the Israelites so that whoever gazed on it would be healed from the snakes that bit them in the desert. In the same manner, Jesus says, he must be "lifted up" in order to become the source of eternal life for all who believe. John has in mind that the cross will not simply be a place of sacrifice and suffering, but a place of departure, of return, when Jesus resumes his life with the Father.

Jesus ascends to the cross. As we will see later in this Gospel, the cross will actually be a place of glorification.

Q 16. Does John 3:16 teach salvation by faith only? With verse 16 we are reading John's commentary on the importance of Jesus' words to Nicodemus. The statement that God loves *the world* is surprising on two counts. (1) Judaism rarely spoke of God's loving the world outside of Israel. God desires to reach this world through Israel, his child. It is a uniquely Christian idea to say that God's love extends beyond the limits of race and nation. (2) John tells his readers elsewhere that they are not to love the world because it is a place of disbelief and hostility. This helpful insight gives a clue to what John means by "the world." In John's writings "world" is the realm of humanity arrayed in opposition to God. Thus, Jesus

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enters this world in his incarnation, knowing that hostility will result and that sacrifice will be needed in order to redeem the world. This dimension of the Son's work must be underscored: The Son did not come to the world to save a select few ; rather, he came to save the world, namely, the all-encompassing circle of men and women who inhabit this planet, people who habitually embrace darkness. John is describing what happens when those in the world make a choice to believe; they are transformed into children of God. Explain. Such people live righteously because God is at work in them, not because they have a native desire to be godly. Jesus speaks of "doing" the truth. This indicates that "truth" is a matter of both thought and practice. Living by the truth is contrasted with doing what is evil

Q 17. How was Jesus the "light" who came into the world? He is the contrast to darkness and sin. Why is this such a fitting description of Him? Why did some reject the light? Jesus gives the reason for the world's rejection of Him: He is the light who exposes whether a person is righteous or not. The reason unbelievers prefer darkness is fundamentally moral: they love their sin and do not want the light to expose it. What are the consequences of rejecting it? Those who do not receive the remedy God has provided in Christ will perish. Jesus explained what keeps people from faith and rescue in Him. It is because they are drawn to darkness, and love it more than the light. There is a critical moral dimension to unbelief that is often denied or ignored. When we think of the love of sin that sends people to hell, we often only think of notorious sin. But the simple demand to be lord of my own life is enough of a sin to deserve condemnation before God. What happens when one comes to the light? A person becomes aware of their sins and must repent to receive Christ.

**John's Second Testimony**

**Read** John 3:22-36

Q 18. Why was John baptizing in Aeon near Salim? There was a lot of water there even in dry weather. John's work of baptizing was still showing itself effective; Jesus and His disciples were continuing a similar message of repentance. What conclusions, if any, can be drawn from that? John the Baptist had attracted many followers, Jesus and His disciples continuing that work shows the approval of what John was doing. As Jesus' popularity grew there was a dispute among the disciples of each. We don't know what the dispute was about. May I remind us that

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the Jews believed that their heritage from Abraham was their saving grace. The only ones who were baptized were those joining the Jewish faith.

Q 19. What testimony did John give about Jesus on this occasion? John first answered his worried disciples that everything he had - including those who responded to his ministry - were a gift from God. If they are God's gift, then they should be received gratefully. John explained to his followers that he was like the best man at a wedding; he isn't the bridegroom. He isn't to be the focus of attention, but to supervise the bringing of two people together. In the Jewish wedding customs of that day, the friend of the bridegroom arranged many of the details of the wedding and brought the bride to the groom. Nevertheless, the friend of the bridegroom was never the focus of attention, and wanted it that way. Morris says, "Jesus is God. In the Old Testament, it was only Yahweh who was the husband of Israel." The Baptist would have been well aware that in the Old Testament Israel is regarded as the bride of Jehovah." Jesus is not only different from everyone else; Jesus is also greater than everyone else because he comes from heaven."

Q 20. What awaits those who "believe in the Son?" He who believes in the Son has everlasting life. What does it mean to believe on Jesus? Charles Spurgeon says, "When you believe in Jesus, you have set your seal to the testimony of Jesus, which is the revelation of the Lord. You have certified that you believe in God as true."

Closing prayer: Father, strengthen our belief in Your Son so that we may reflect Your love in our lives, and have eternal life forever. Amen.

John 1:35-51	John 2:1-12	John 3: 1-21
	John 2:13-25	John 3:22-36

Scripture for next Sunday: Matthew 4:12-25, 8:14-17 ; Mark 1:14-39; Luke 3:19-20; 4:14-15; 4:31-5:11; John 4:1-54

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